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«Η ελληνική προσέγγιση στην Ισραηλινό-Παλαιστινιακή Διένεξη (1948-2015)»

Μπίσδα- Ρωτίδη Δέσποινα

Επιβλέπων: Δρ. Νικόλαος Τζιφάκης

Επίκουρος Καθηγητής Τμήματος ΠΕΔΙΣ

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"Greek Approach on the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict (1948-2015)"

Bisda- Rotidi Despina

Supervisor: Dr. Nikolaos Tzifakis

Assistant Professor of PEDIS

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Αφιερώνω την εργασία αυτή

στον αγαπημένο μου πατέρα.

«Η Ελληνική Προσέγγιση στην Ισραηλινό-Παλαιστινιακή Διένεξη (1948-2015)»

Σημαντικοί Όροι: (Ισραηλινό- παλαιστινιακή διαμάχη, Ελληνική μεσανατολική πολιτική, Ελληνοϊσραηλινές σχέσεις)

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα εργασία πραγματεύεται το θέμα της ελληνικής προσέγγισης στην ισραηλινό- παλαιστινιακή διαμάχη από το 1948 μέχρι και το 2015. Δεδομένου ότι η εν λόγω διένεξη εξελίχθηκε από μία τοπικής κλίμακας σε μία ευρύτερη περιφερειακής κλίμακας σύρραξη, η ελληνική εξωτερική πολιτική στην περιοχή της Μέσης Ανατολής σχεδιάστηκε βάσει των συναφών εξελίξεων με την εν λόγω περιοχή. Ως απόρροια σημαντικών εθνικών συμφερόντων, οι ελληνικές κυβερνήσεις, υιοθέτησαν μια ορισμένη πολιτική επί του υπό εξέταση θέματος.

Από το τέλος του Β΄ Παγκοσμίου Πολέμου μέχρι και τη δεκαετία του 1980, η ελληνική μεσανατολική πολιτική υπήρξε σταθερά φιλοαραβική, ενώ οι σχέσεις της με το Ισραήλ παρέμειναν για δεκαετίες ψυχρές και ανταγωνιστικές. Ο βασικός λόγος για την αντιστρόφως ανάλογη σχέση της με το Ισραήλ και τους Άραβες έγκειται στα ιδιαίτερα εθνικά συμφέροντα που διατηρούσε, όπως χαρακτηριστικά αυτά ήταν η διασφάλιση της αραβικής ψήφου επί του κυπριακού, αλλά και η προστασία της ελληνικής κοινότητας της Αιγύπτου. Έτσι, η Αθήνα δεν αναγνώρισε το Ισραήλ παρά το 1949. Κι ενώ η τελευταία υποστήριξε το δικαίωμα των Παλαιστινίων για αυτοδιάθεση και δημιουργία ανεξάρτητου κράτους, παράλληλα, υποστήριξε και το δικαίωμα του Ισραήλ να ζει σε ειρηνικές συνθήκες.

Με το τέλος της δεκαετίας του 1980 μια σημαντική αλλαγή επήλθε στην ελληνική μεσανατολική πολιτική. Η ομαλοποίηση των Ελληνοϊσραηλινών σχέσεων σημειώθηκε στις αρχές της δεκαετίας, ενώ αυτές ενδυναμώθηκαν περαιτέρω από το 2010 και έπειτα. Παρά το γεγονός ότι οι εν λόγω σχέσεις ενισχύθηκαν σημαντικά, ωστόσο δεν έβλαψαν την παραδοσιακά φιλική σχέση της Ελλάδας με τον αραβικό κόσμο. Οι πλέον πρόσφατες κυβερνήσεις συνέχισαν την υποστήριξή τους για τη δημιουργία των δύο κρατών. Ενώ η θέση αυτή εξακολουθεί να παραμένει η σημερινή στάση της παρούσας κυβέρνησης έναντι του Παλαιστινιακού ζητήματος.

"Greek Approach on the Israeli- Palestinian Conflict (1948-2015)"

Abstract

This paper will examine the Greek approach kept on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict from 1948 until 2015. Considering that the conflict has historically evolved from a local scale to a large-scale regional one, the so-called Arab- Israeli conflict, Greek Middle Eastern policy has drawn upon the relevant developments. Providing that Greek policy has been driven by national interests maintained in the region, Greek governments adopted a certain attitude towards the conflict.

Since the post- war period and up to the 1980s, Greek policy in the Middle East was mostly pro- Arab, whereby, Greek- Israeli relations remained cold and antagonistic. The main reasons behind this inverse relationship of Greece with the Arabs and the Jews were specific national interests preserved, such as to obtain Arab support in the Greek- Turkish dispute over Cyprus and to protect Greek communities in the Arab states. Therefore, Athens recognized only de facto the Jewish state in 1949. Although Greece supported for the recognition of Palestinian rights, including those of self-determination and statehood, it also supported for the right of Israel to exist in peace.

The end of the 1980s brought a significant change in Greek Middle Eastern policy, particularly after Greek- Israeli normalization of relations in 1990. As the country pursued a policy of greater accommodation with Israel, bilateral relations improved substantially, particularly after the late 1990s. Since 2010, Greek- Israeli relations strengthened further, however not at the expense of its Arab allies. As a result, support for the creation of two states continued steadfastly, while this remains the current position of the present government on the Palestinian issue.

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Abbreviations

E.C.	European Community
E.U.	European Union
JDP	Justice and Development Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	New Democracy
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SYRIZA-EKM	Coalition of the Radical Left – Unitary Social Front
TWA	Trans World Airlines
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rooted in the dispute over the land of Palestine claimed by both Jews and the Palestinians appeared in the end of the 19th century. The nature of the conflict has historically evolved from a local-scale conflict to a large-scale regional one; since it started as sectarian, between Palestinians, Jews and Arabs and transformed into an Arab- Israeli War following the establishment of Israel. Despite repeated attempts to end the conflict, achieving peace in the Middle East still seems elusive. Since this conflict has formed the core part of the wider Arab-Israeli conflict, its significance is not limited to regional parameters, but involves general international interests, due to geopolitical and economic importance of the region.

Greece has traditionally pursued a policy of friendship with the Arab states. This relationship is based on both historical and contemporary factors. Greece and the Arabs have shared a common history since antiquity. Ancient Greek cities traded and interacted with Egypt, Phoenicia and Palestine. The Roman conquest of Greece, not only did not diminish the Greek presence in Middle East, but also Greek culture flourished. The Byzantine Empire, which was a Greek- speaking state, occupied parts of North Africa and the Middle East. Greece and the Arabs have had a common history of subjugation by the Ottoman Turks, whereas a large proportion of Christian Arabs are of Greek Orthodox faith. In addition, postwar Greek governments followed a pro- Arab foreign policy so as to protect the large Greek community in Egypt. As well as secure Arab support on the Cyprus Problem at the United Nations (UN).

In this paper, we shall investigate the Greek approach on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting from the establishment of Israel and until the parliamentary recommendation for the creation of a Palestinian. The aim is to highlight the different approaches adopted by successive Greek governments on the conflict. The Greek political system's drastic shifts from civilian to military and liberal to conservative governance left their mark on the formulation of the Middle Eastern policy. Despite the differences between the two most powerful parties, which dominated Greek politics for almost 40 years, PASOK and New Democracy (ND) did not change in substance their pro- Arab orientation. This also applied even to periods when differences between the parties were irreconcilable. As for example when

Karamanlis' had stated that *"We belong to the West"* in the 1970s, while Papandreou was in search of new alliances among the Non-Aligned countries in the 1980s.

Additionally, Greek policy in the Middle East differentiated drastically if taking into consideration the various policies adopted and adapted to external and domestic forces of influence.

After the 1967 Arab- Israeli War, Greece called for Israel's evacuation of all occupied territories and supported the Palestinian struggle for an independent statehood. At the same time, it also supported Israel's right to exist within safe and recognized borders. This position remains the current stance of the present government on the Palestinian Problem.

The specific task of the first chapter is to present the various Greek attitudes adopted on major Middle Eastern developments occurred after the creation of Israel, and until the beginning of the 1980s. Among these developments that determined partly the stance of each government separately have been the issue of Israel's recognition, the Suez crisis erupted in the summer of 1956, along with Nasser's decision to nationalize foreign enterprises, the Six-Days and Yom Kippur Wars, as well as the Camp David peace agreement. In addition, Greek Middle Eastern policy has also been influenced by domestic politics since the country after the end of the civil war struggled to stabilize its political and economic landscape. Eventually, it should not be left out the relevant influence exerted from abroad, since the Cold War era had not ended up until 1990.

The task of the second chapter is to examine the stance preserved by the socialist government of Andreas Papandreou throughout the 1980s. It is indisputable that the advent of PASOK to power signaled a decidedly more pro-Arab stance on the conflict. Papandreou's Third World affiliations, anti-American and pro-Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) posture defined, also, his party's foreign policy goals pursued in the Middle East. These goals were restricted to the need to obtain Arab support on the Cyprus issue, defend Greek territorial rights and interests in the Aegean, and improve economic ties with the Arab states. Despite PASOK's unwavering support of the PLO, the socialist party also pursued a friendlier relationship with Israel after the mid-1980s. Despite Papandreou was accused of being

'soft' on terrorism, in fact the government had defended the Palestinian liberation movement.

The task of the third chapter is to discuss on the beginning of a new era between Greek- Israeli relations, which took place after the end of the Cold War. Immediately after the recognition of Israel in 1990, a short-lived renaissance of bilateral cooperation took place. Athens started to consider seriously improving bilateral relations not earlier than in late 1990s. The idea that Greece could gain by promoting relations with Israel started to grow within government circles, however not at the expense of its relationship with the Arabs. Since 2010, Greek- Israeli relations improved rapidly. The strengthening of these relations has been the result of the Turkish- Israeli deterioration of relations started in 2008. On the initiative of Netanyahu's government, the two countries, eventually, signed various agreements in the fields of security, energy, trade and tourism.

CHAPTER 1 - THE POST-WAR PERIOD

1.1 Cold Greek- Israeli Relations

After the end of the civil war in 1949, successive Greek governments concentrated on opposing communism by adopting a policy of military vigilance and economic improvement (Sakkas n.d., 1). However, they also followed close developments in Cyprus, the Balkans and the Middle East (ibid). In the Middle East, they pursued mostly a pro-Arab policy due to specific national interests maintained in the region.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began as a struggle over the same land, known as Palestine. Following the first Arab-Israeli War (1948-1949) this land was divided into three parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River) and the Gaza Strip. Since the 1967 Six- Day War, when Israel occupied 22 percent of mandatory Palestine, Palestinians have been living under military occupation. From 2007, and until today, Israel and Egypt have imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip with the pretext of limiting Palestinian rocket attacks. The violent situation today is described by the Amnesty International as *"Israeli forces carrying out unlawful killings of Palestinians, using intentional lethal force without justification"*.

Successive Greek administrations have viewed negatively the prospect and creation of a Jewish state side by side with an Arab one. Even the traumatic experience shared among Greek and Jewish populations during the Second World War[1] did not prevent them from doing differently. They consistently criticized Israel's expansionist policy and called for a fair solution that would acknowledge the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to live within secure and recognized borders. In the meantime, they refrained from pursuing overtly anti-Israeli policies, while rejecting several Israeli proposals for establishing full diplomatic relations with the state of Israel (Agnantopoulos 2007, 359-360; Hatzivassiliou 1992, 53; Hila 1988, 375).

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[1] At the conclusion of the Second World War, as many as 86% of all Greek Jews perished with about 10,226 (out of 77,377) surviving. A large number of them emigrated primarily to Israel, North and South America. By 1956, only about 6000 Jews were living in Greece (Tziampiris 2015, p. 46).

Relations between Greece and Israel during the Cold War were distant and antagonistic. This was not due to an anti-Semitic behavior, but rather national interest considerations. Among the most important stakes at risk had been the Arab support over the Cyprus issue, the existence of Greek communities in the Arab world and dependence on Arab oil[2] (Tziampiris 2015, 10; Athanassopoulou 2010, 111).

1.1.1 Recognition of Israel

The question of Palestine was brought before the UN General Assembly by Britain in 1947 after it failed to control effectively the already tense situation in Palestine. Britain decided to relinquish its mandate over Palestine and requested from the UN to determine the status of the country. Indeed, at the same year, the UN adopted the Resolution 181 (II)[3] and recommended the division of the country into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. Eventually, the UN resolution also known as 'Partition Plan' was voted for by 33 states, including the two great powers; i.e., the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), while 13 voted against and 10 abstained.

Despite US pressures, given that Greece was one of the main recipients of the Marshall aid after WWII, the country voted against the UN Palestine Partition Plan, refusing to recognize Israel. Greece's position was dictated by its opposition to the dismemberment of Palestine's territory, since this violated the principle of self-determination and the right of territorial integrity (Hila 1988, 360-361).

Immediately after its establishment as state and its recognition by many countries, Israel was finally admitted in the UN General Assembly. In this vote, Greece abstained[4].

With respect to the issue of internationalization of Jerusalem, Greece adopted a favorable position unlike the US and other western states in the UN[5]. Greece's attitude reflected a concern for the interests maintained by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the Holy City (ibid).

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[2] At the time, the region of Middle East possessed 42% of global oil revenues. Palestine played a prominent role in exporting oil through the pipeline Iraq- Haifa.
[3] UN/ GA Resolution A/RES/181 (II)/1947.
[4] UN/ GA Resolution A/RES/273 (III).
[5] UN/ GA Resolution A/RES/303(III).

Greece consistently positioned itself against Israel and for the Palestinian people on all emerging issues, such as the Palestinian right of return, the status of Jerusalem, the Conciliation Commission of Palestine, the Holy Places, the armistice infringements, Israel's membership in international organizations and restrictions on freedom of navigation in the Gulfs of Suez and Akaba (Nachmani 1987, 98).

Consular relations between Israel and Greece were established in 1952. Thus, the Greek consul general in Jerusalem obtained the title of the diplomatic representative, while Israel maintained only an honorary consul (Abadi 2000, 42). For more than 40 years, Greece rejected several Israeli proposals in return with recognizing Israel, while at the same time attempted to sustain traditionally friendly relations with the Arabs (Tziampiris 2015, 46; Abadi 2000, 40; Agnantopoulos 2007, 359). Indicative was the 1957 Israeli proposal to Greece to support the Cyprus issue at the UN (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 53).

Overall, Greece's opposition to the Partition Plan and belated recognition of Israel were determined by national interests preserved in the Arab world (Nachmani 1987, 91). These interests were to obtain Arab support in the country's conflict with Turkey over Cyprus at the UN, to protect its prosperous minorities in Arab countries, particularly in Egypt, to control the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, to secure energy supplies, to enhance economic cooperation with the Arab world and guarantee unrestricted passage through the Suez Canal (Abadi 2000, 40; Sakkas n.d., 2; Hatzivassiliou 1992, 64; Agnantopoulos 2007, 360). Additionally, Greece as a NATO member was keen on becoming a potential link between the West and the Arab world (Sakkas n.d., 2).

1.1.2 The 1st Arab- Israeli War

According to Greek press reports, the 1948 Arab- Israeli War was depicted as clashes between a heavily armed Israeli force and a number of Arab shepherds (Nachmani 1987, 91, 98).

With the outbreak of the first Arab- Israel war in 1948, Athens banned any transit of persons and material from its territory on the way to Israel. Additionally, Greek authorities confiscated two Israeli planes involved in the conflict, which were

put in the service of the Royal Hellenic Airforce to conduct operations against the Communist insurgents (ibid).

In May 1948, the Greek Prime Minister C. Tsaldaris offered to accept any Palestinian Jew forced to flee from Palestine. Greece's hostility towards Israel had surpassed that of Egypt's, as it voted against Israel's admission even to organizations with no political significance; such as the International Postal Union or the World Agriculture Organization (Nachmani 1987, 98).

1.1.3 'Nasserism, the Suez Crisis and the Cyprus problem

With the Arab- Israeli conflict intensifying after the advent of the Egyptian President G. A. Nasser to power and namely after his decision to nationalize the Suez Canal, Athens kept a neutral stance toward the conflict. At the UN, it condemned the Anglo-French intervention strongly[6] and opted to remain neutral (Sakkas n.d., 2).

After the Suez crisis broke out in July 1956, Britain and France decided to convene (under US guidance) the London Conference, to discuss the status of the Canal (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 57; Hila 1988, 362). Although Athens was invited as it possessed a powerful merchant fleet, it decided not to participate. The decision of the 1956 K. Karamanlis government was taken after strong domestic political discord had afflicted the country[7] (Hila 1988, 363). In essence, it was made on the ground of avoiding any confrontation with Egypt and jeopardizing traditionally friendly relations with the Egyptians (Abadi 2000, 45). Additionally, out of the twenty-four nations invited by the United Kingdom, only Egypt and Greece declined (ibid). Hence, obtaining Arab support on the Cyprus problem was considered as a necessary move. Greece's refusal to attend the London conference was also a sign of resentment toward Great Britain's negative attitude on Cyprus (Hila 1988, 362-363).

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[6] The Greek permanent representative at the UN C. Xanthopoulos-Palamas described the intervention as 'a murder' and strongly criticized the Anglo-French imperialist policies in both Cyprus and the Arab world. Additionally, in the NATO Ministerial Meeting (12 Dec. 1956) the Greek Foreign Minister E. Averof-Tositsa while he was explaining the Greek policy in the Suez crisis he stressed the need for NATO to approach the Arab world and show an interest in the Palestinian question.

[7] According to press reports, the Foreign Minister Averof supported the Greek participation, in contrast to other members of the government, such as Papaligouras, Kasimatis and Apostolides who opposed.

In addition, the significance of the Suez Canal for the Greek shipping industry was deemed essential for the country's prosperity. The Greek fleet was depended on constant Arab cooperation and demanded free passage (Hila 1988, 363).

Furthermore, the position of the Greek community in Egypt during the Suez crisis had deteriorated. According to the Greek representative in NATO, Michael Melas, between 1947 and 1956, 1,500 Greeks had left Egypt, while after the invasion the rate was 500 per month (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 60). The Arab states headed by Nasser had threatened Greece that if it supported the UN Partition Plan severe measures would be taken against its Greek community (Nachmani 1987, 106). Greeks in Egypt made up the strongest and most privileged foreign community, in the spheres of commerce, education and religion (ibid). They constituted a state within a state and exerted important pressure on Athens to withhold the recognition of Israel. They had even sent a delegation to Athens with a graphic forecast of the pogroms they would endure should Greece voted for the partition of Palestine (ibid).

After Nasser's decision to nationalize foreign enterprises, the interests of the Greeks were damaged severely (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 60-61). The measures taken and the tough laws enacted were directed against all foreigners. Such measures were seizure of properties without compensation, nationalization of banks and insurance companies, abolition of separate schools, land confiscations and foreign currency restrictions (Nachmani 1987, 105-107). This move resulted in the exodus of a large number of foreigners from the country. By the mid-60's, the number of Greeks remaining fell to about 30,000 from 140,000 who were in the 1950's. According to Greek press reports, the damage inflicted was analogous to the Asia Minor catastrophe (ibid).

In the meantime, Greece was also concerned with the Cyprus question. The Cyprus problem had dominated Greek- Cypriot politics since the early 1950's. Greece's approach on the Arab- Israeli conflict revolved around its concern to secure Arab support on the Cyprus issue and protect its Greek communities (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 49).

In the mid 1950's, after Turkey had established herself firmly over the Cyprus question, particularly since the British deportation of Archbishop Makarios in 1956, the country had a good reason to increase its interaction with the Arabs. In essence,

Greek governments viewed the Arab countries as a possible source of support, as they represented a big group of states and votes at the UN (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 50-51).

Later on, Nasser and some Arab states helped on the Cyprus question. In December 1965, Egypt, Iraq and Syria voted in favor of UN resolution 2077[8], reaffirming the sovereignty of the Greek-dominated Cyprus and the illegality of any external, namely Turkish intervention (Sakkas n.d., 2).

Another concern of the Greek government in Middle East was to control the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. As the majority of the Orthodox Christians were Arabs, Athens' diplomacy had to keep a certain balance in the Arab- Israeli conflict. Its aim was to keep the Patriarchate of Jerusalem under the influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul and prevent the Russian Church and the Soviets to get a foothold in Jerusalem and the Middle Eastern affairs (Hatzivassiliou 1992, 52-53).

1.2 Neutral Stance Preserved

After the military coup of April 21 1967, a group of colonels of the Greek army took control of the country and formed a dictatorship. The seven-year military regime ensured the continued alignment of Greece with the United States, while supported the American strategy in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense area and the Middle East (Xydis 1974, 512). With regard to the US, not only it did not condemn the Greek military junta as it suspended democracy, but it was among the first to recognize the new regime. Since, the US pursued to maintain the balance of power and contain Soviet expansionism and radical Arab nationalism (Sakkas 2007, 5).

The Greek dictatorship served various western plans in the Arab- Israeli conflict. During Cold War, Greece was a very important NATO member and strategically vital to the US, due to the significance of its Southern Flank in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Greek military government with respect to the Arab- Israeli conflict was presented with a great dilemma. On one side was the concern to maintain the image of

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[8] UN General Assembly Resolution 1965/ 2077 (XX).

neutrality in the conflict and keeping its traditionally friendly ties with the Arab states; whereas on the other, the desire to mend fences with the US and subsequently Israel. Eventually, after Greece decided to move closer to Israel, diplomatic representatives were appointed in 1969. However, de facto recognition remained in force (Abadi 2000, 53).

As the main concerns of the Greek military regime were to secure Arab support on the Cyprus question, supplying of cheap Arab oil and the thirty thousand Greeks remaining in Egypt, the Greek dictatorship opted to continue the long Greek tradition to keep close ties with the Arabs. Despite the military government declared neutral in the major Middle Eastern crisis of 1967 and 1973, this policy remained on a declaratory level. Indicative was the 1973 statement of the then Greek Foreign Minister, who excluded the possibility of turning against the Arab states, as it contradicted the official position of the regime (Sakkas 2007, 2; Hila 1988, 365-369; Abadi 2000, 51).

An overall explanation of the junta's neutral stance kept on the Arab- Israeli conflict can be justified on its concern to secure its newly acquired power, in parallel with serving American interests (Hila 1988, 366).

1.2.1 The Six- Day War

In the Six-Day War of June 1967, Israel defeated Egypt, Jordan and Syria and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the eastern part of Jerusalem, as well as the Syrian Golan Heights. The 1967 War underlined the strategic position of Greece in the eastern Mediterranean (Sakkas 2007, 11).

During the 1967 War, the colonels allowed the US to use Greek territorial and air space. Thus, they granted access to military bases, Greek ports, and repair and communication facilities (Sakkas, 10-11; Xydis 1974, 512). Not only did they allow the US Sixth Fleet to use facilities in Crete, but they also permitted to Israeli helicopters to land on the island of Rhodes for refueling (Sakkas 2007, 10; Abadi 2000, 52). Additionally, after an agreement made between the US Navy and the Hellenic Navy, on January 8, 1973, important home- porting facilities near Piraeus were made available to the military alliance (Xydis 1974, 512).

In the aftermath of the 1967 war, Greece supported at the UN the most favorable draft resolution[9] referring to the settlement of the dispute and withdrawal of Israeli armed forces to the positions held prior to June 5, 1967. Since then, Greek policy on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict remained steadfast in stressing that Israeli forces should withdraw to the pre- 1967 borders (Hila 1988, 365-366).

Shortly after the 1967 War, Greece became vulnerable to terrorist activities and thus the military regime did not remain indifferent to the Arab- Israeli conflict. The Greek Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, S. Pattakos condemned the terrorist attack carried out by Palestinian commandos against El Al Airlines in Athens in December 1968, but instructed the press to avoid portraying the Palestinian commandos as terrorists (Abadi 2000, 52). It should be noted that leading figures of the regime, namely Pattakos and Pipinelis were known for their pro-Arab sentiments and their admiration for the Egyptian President Nasser. Moreover, President Papadopoulos was also known as 'Nasser' to some of his colleagues (Sakkas n.d., 7).

1.2.2 The Yom Kippur War

The 1973 Arab- Israeli War or Yom Kippur War broke out after the Egyptians took first the initiative and almost accomplished a successful victory. As the American administration provided strong support to Israel, the Greek government in compliance with the long tradition of friendship with the Arabs declared itself neutral to the conflict. Nevertheless, although the military regime had previously refused to provide Greek bases and facilities to the Americans in the 1973 Arab- Israeli War, in fact it did. Indicative was the statement of Prime Minister Markezinis who emphasized that *"many ties connect us with the Arabs, but nothing divides us from the state of Israel, which has also a place under the sun"*. According to another announcement made by the new foreign Minister Xanthopoulos- Palamas, *"the Greek sea and air space is not being used for any activity whatever related to the state of War in the Middle East and especially against the Arab countries with which Greece maintains good relations"* (Sakkas 2007, 13). Even in a formal statement of the Greek President Papadopoulos to his Algerian counterpart, the first stressed the country's right to deny accommodations to US armed forces (Xydis 1974, 524).

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[9] UN draft Resolution A/L 522 (03 July 1976)

More specifically, Greek facilities were made available again to the United States, as the Greek government allowed the US to use Greek communication facilities and the airports at Athens and Souda Bay in Crete. The fact that the junta facilitated the American administration can be inferred by the words of the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral E. R. Zumwalt during his speech at the Washington University in 1976: *"During the Arab- Israeli conflict of 1973 the Greek chief navy who was in Washington at that time visited me and told me 'do not listen to what is said in Greece publicly. Use your bases in Greece as you want…' Democratic Israel was saved in 1973 only because of the existence of fascist Portugal, fascist Spain and fascist Greece"* (Sakkas 2007, 15).

1.3 Greek Middle East Policy Shift

After the establishment of democracy in 1974, the new civilian government of K. Karamanlis (1974-1980) embarked on adopting a 'multidimensional' foreign policy. It concentrated on reducing US reliance, obtaining support on the Cyprus problem, particularly after the Turkish invasion and improving relations with the European Community and the Arabs (Roussos 2005, 81; Sakkas n.d., 5). The pursuance of these objectives had a certain impact on Greece's position toward the Israeli- Palestinian conflict.

More precisely, two factors determined the stance of Karamanlis government on the dispute. The first emanated from the oil crises of the 1970's and the country's concern to secure stability of oil supplies, by expanding its exports and making use of the economic potential of the Arab states. Whereby, the second came from the need of the country to achieve maximum Arab support at the UN and other forums on the Cyprus issue (Sakkas n.d., 5; Hila 1988, 369).

Greek- Arab relations improved considerably on economic and trade level in the period between 1975 and 1979. Thus, a special section was set up in the Greek Foreign Ministry for the Promotion and Economic Development with the Arab countries, in 1975. Following the visits of the Greek Prime Minister, firstly to Egypt and later to Syria and Saudi Arabia, numerous contracts were signed covering trade, finance, banking, transport, fishing and cultural aspects (Hila 1988, 370). By 1979,

North Africa and the Middle East absorbed 20% of the Greek exports and topped the 30% mark in 1980. Additionally, a Greek- Arab Chamber of Commerce and Greek-Arab bank were set up (Tsakalogiannis 1984, 109). Transport and communication links, namely shipping lines were expanded mainly toward Syria and Lebanon. (Sakkas n.d., 6; Hila 1988, 371).

On the political side, the Karamanlis government strove to achieve maximum Arab support at the UN, on the Cyprus issue. On their part, the Arab states condemned at the UN the Turkish invasion and did not recognize the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. However, few exceptions existed as for instance that of Saudi Arabia, which voted against the immediate withdrawal of foreign military presence from the Republic of Cyprus[10] (Sakkas n.d. 5; Roussos 2005, 84).

In the meantime, the Greek government supported the Arabs and the Palestinian cause at the UN on various resolutions[11]. The most profound were Israel's expansionist policy, the right to exist in peace (for both parts of the conflict), the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war. Additionally, they adopted resolutions on recognition of Palestinian rights and the right to self-determination (Hila 1988, 371).

Despite the Greek government voted for most of UN resolutions with regard to recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestinians, it refrained from recognizing officially the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (Hila 1988, 371; Tsakalogiannis 1984, 109; Roussos 2005, 83). It is thus important to stress that on one side, the Greek government had recognized the participation of the Palestinians in the negotiations as a necessary precondition for a comprehensive solution, whereas on the other; it refused to grant privileges that would amount to the recognition of statehood (Hila 1988, 371).

Furthermore, the Greek government did not support the Camp David peace agreements of 1978 and decided to abstain from voting. This decision was partly as a

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[10] UN Resolution 33/15 (1978).

[11] UN Resolutions 3092 (1973), 31/ 150(1976), 33/113,A,B(1978), 34/90B.C(1979).

result to avoid direct confrontation with the US and partly not to jeopardize its economic interests and political relations with the Arab countries (Hila 1988, 373).

Besides, Greece's stance on the Camp David accords was also determined by the fact that the country was in the last and most critical phase (January 1978 – May 1979) of the negotiations for its accession in the European Community (EC). Additionally, some EC member- states, such as Western Germany and the Netherlands sustained good relations with the state of Israel; while supporting Greece's accession to the Community (Hila 1988, 374; Tsakalogiannis 1984, 110).

Furthermore, Greek opposition parties driven mainly by pro- Palestinian sentiments pressured Karamanlis government not to support the Israeli- Egyptian peace agreement. The harshest criticism came from the leader of the opposition, Andreas Papandreou who defined it as *"a mistake"*. Additionally, Greece was in a pre-election period and the decision to rejoin NATO's military command in October 1980 had already put the country into a complex situation (ibid).

The Venice Declaration issued on June 13, 1980 constituted an important step in resolving the Middle Eastern problem, within the EC framework. The nine member-states of the EC called for the recognition of the legitimate rights of Palestinians, including those of self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, while for the first time the EC supported PLO's right to be connected to peace initiatives. In this respect the Greek government had positioned itself next to the EC (Sakkas n.d., 7; Hila 1988; 374-375).

Eventually, Greek- Palestinian relations upgraded after the establishment of the Palestinian Information Office in Athens, in 1980. During the next decade presented in the following chapter, the next socialist government pursued a more active pro-Arab policy, culminating in the granting of diplomatic status to the PLO at the same de facto level that Israel had (Abadi 2000, 57).

CHAPTER 2 – 'THE POPULIST DECADE'

2.1 An actively pro-Palestinian Policy

The Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) came to power in October 1981 with a strong mandate[12] to implement the promise of 'change' its leader, Andreas Papandreou had promised since his party was in opposition in the late 1970's. As Papandreou adopted other strong nationalist slogans such as *'Greece belongs to the Greeks'* he achieved to sweep into power and form the first socialist government in Greek history (Couloumbis 1993, 116-118; McCaskill 1988, 310).

Since the founding of PASOK in 1974, Papandreou defined the party's radical foreign policy as it should *"disengage itself from any military, political and economic organization, which undermined Greece's national sovereignty"*. However, pre-election verbal promises and stated intentions, which included the withdrawal from NATO and the EC, as well as not to renew US bases agreements, remained a dead letter. As Papandreou had stated *"I refuse to recognize international contracts and agreements, which have led Greece to an economic, political and military dependence on the monopolistic establishment of the West and particularly of American imperialism"*. Instead, he opted to adjust and employ his predecessor's foreign policy, which had thoroughly denounced since 1974. Concurrently, he called for the creation of a non-aligned Greece, as he employed Third World and neutralist foreign-policy planks (Loulis 1984, 3; Couloumbis 1993, 112-128, McCaskill 1988, 306).

Political scientist Theodore Couloumbis who described PASOK as a party *"whose mind is in the West, but whose heart is in the Third World"* argued further that *"Papandreou has felt that the country would be served best by adopting a model of self-reliance in solidarity with other member states of the Third World"* (McCaskill 1988, 308-309).

PASOK's Policy Declaration published in the summer of 1981 indicated Papandreou's mainstream philosophy and his party's goals. It stressed on the party's pledge to work actively for a *"genuine, proud, nonaligned and multifaceted foreign policy"*, so as to strengthen the country's national independence. In addition,

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[12] PASOK received 48.1% of the popular vote and obtained 172 out of the 300 parliamentary seats.

emphasis was placed on the development of good relations *"with the Arabic nation, which constitutes a dynamic factor in the world's progress"* (ibid).

Papandreou's own model for radical socialism dismissed the Soviet style 'state socialism' and acknowledged according to his words *"the genuine anti-imperialist forces of the Arab world"*. Both Papandreou and the party showed considerable sympathy for the Arab countries, namely Algeria, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the PLO, with which they maintained close relations. In his book, *'Democracy at gunpoint'* he placed Greece in the Arab world *"even though it is part of the European continent and the Western European Community"*. Moreover, in a lecture he gave in the U.S. in 1969, he described Greece as *"partaking of the characteristics of the Third World"* (McCaskill 1988, 307; Loulis 1984, 3).

The advent of PASOK to power signaled a decidedly more pro- Arab stance on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict (Agnantopoulos 2007, 361). Nevertheless, the party's position, in substance, had not been different from that of its conservative predecessors (Couloumbis 1993, 121). Even its policy towards Israel compared to the party's voting record in the U N was no more hostile than that of previous governments (Abadi 2000, 64).

More specifically, PASOK called for a settlement of the Middle East question and voted for the UN Security Council Resolution 242 demanding Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 frontiers. However, it also supported the equivalent right of the Palestinians to live in a state of their own. At the same time, it strongly expressed its support to the Palestinian cause. Support to the Palestinians was one of its cornerstones and contended that no peace should exist in the Middle East, given that the key to the problem had been the solution to the Palestinian issue. It could be argued that both the leader and his party had appeared genuinely committed to the Palestinians (Athanassopoulou 2010, 111; Kapsis 1988, 58; McCaskill 1988, 307, 315; Sakkas n.d., 6).

With respect to the socialist government's policy goals in the Middle East, these were restricted to the need to obtain Arab support on the Cyprus issue and defend Greek territorial rights and interests in the Aegean Sea (Abadi 2000, 58). Thus, the ruling party similar to previous governments continued to compete with Turkey in its attempt to find favor in the eyes of the Arab states, whose support on the Cyprus

and Aegean issues had been deemed essential (Abadi 2000, 59). Another point of great importance was also the necessity to bring investments into the country, as well as promote Greek business interests in the Middle East, given that the Greek economy was in dire need of petrodollars (Agnantopoulos 2007, 367; Sakkas n.d., 7).

PASOK's commitment to the Palestinian cause was rather a reflection of the injustice imposed on a small number of people by the great powers. Palestinians were seen as the underdogs of the present world who deserved full support. Reflecting on Greek public opinion, Greeks and Palestinians were two different nationalities facing a common fate, as both were marked by national tragedies. From the Greek perspective, the policy of Israel in Gaza and the West Bank was identified with Turkey in Cyprus. Such similarities involved *'illicit occupation'*, *'unqualified use of force'*, *'disrespect for UN resolutions'*, *'thousands of refugees'* and attempts to *'alter the demographic composition'*. As it was stated by some members of the socialist government in the Greek parliament: *'The drama of the Palestinian people brought memories from the drama of the refugees from the Asia Minor catastrophe, the political refugees during the junta, the Cypriot refugees who were forced to leave their fatherland by the Turkish irredentism and Attila'* (Tsakaloyannis 1984, 107Agnantopoulos 2007, 275, 374-375).

The coming to power of a socialist government coincided with a change of the US priorities in the region and an attempt by the EC to develop a distinctive policy for the Middle East through the European Political Cooperation (Roussos 2005, 86). This resulted in assisting the ruling party to seek its pro- Arab policy with no significant risks and challenges, as no important pressure exerted from abroad.

PASOK's pro- Arab stance on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict was facilitated significantly by the Venice Declaration and the following positive change of EC's view on the Palestinian cause, given that it advocated for associating the PLO to the negotiations for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Roussos 2005, 86). In any case, the Greek position was not identified completely with the European one. For instance, Arafat's visit to Athens provoked mixed feelings, particularly after the overture made by the French President F. Mitterrand who visited Israel in March 1982 (Hila 1988; 377).

Papandreou's pro- Arab policy throughout his first tenure ended in June 1985, remained the same as in the first few months in office. As growing emphasis was placed on Greece's ties with the Arabs, Arab affairs became a part of the Athens scene. Characteristically, the state-owned Athens Domestic Radio announced its plan, on 12 December 1981 to broadcast Greek news in the Arabic language *"in view of the spectacular increase in the number of Arab visitors, businessmen and tourists",* given also that Arabic was one of the five official languages of the UN (McCaskill 1988, 315).

2.1.1 Arafat' visit to Athens

Immediately after the advent of PASOK to power, the party declared its unreserved support for the Palestinian cause. This can be inferred by the official visit of the Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat to Athens on December 14, 1981. In view of PASOK's belief in the radical role played by the PLO in finding a solution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict and its recognition as being the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, the Greek government decided to grant diplomatic status to the PLO office already operating in Athens (Greek- Palestinian Joint Communiqué 1981, December 16). Thus, Greece became the only member of the EC to have accorded full diplomatic recognition to the PLO at the same de facto level that Israel had (Hila 1988, 377, Abadi 2000, 57).

PASOK's recognition of the PLO triggered a statement from Arafat in which he stressed that due to this act, Greece had *"a front of allies in the Arab World extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean"* and he also promised that *"now the Arabs will prove their friendship toward Greece with deeds".* However, this statement was interpreted by the pro-PASOK Athens daily newspaper, *Eleutherotypia*, as assurance that Papandreou's government after the PLO recognition would be supported financially from the Arabs. In addition, it had been widely rumored that the Arab states following the recognition would assist the new government by depositing capital in Greek banks or making surplus Arab money available to Greek economy. Nevertheless, this seemed more as a wishful thinking of the ruling party, as no significant amounts of money were known to have reached Greece, except from economic agreements signed with the Arab states over the next several years (McCaskill 1988, 311-312).

During the course of the talks held in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual trust, the Greek government and Arafat's delegation expressed their common intention to continue with constructive contribution and consolidating just solutions for both the Palestinian and the Cyprus issues. Additionally, the Palestinian side expressed to the Greek government its gratitude for supporting the Palestinians on the issue of recognition of their inalienable rights, including the rights to homeland, self-determination and establishment of an independent state. On its part, the Greek side expressed its appreciation of the PLO's support to the Cypriot people in their just struggle[13]. With reference to the Greek- Turkish conflict on Cyprus, the Palestinian delegation stressed the need for a just solution on the basis of the withdrawal of foreign troops from the island (Greek- Palestinian Joint Communiqué 1981, December 16).

In addition to the Arafat visit, the Libyan representative in Athens *"demanded"* the expulsion of the Israeli diplomatic mission from Athens as part of Libya's *"demand for full neutrality of Greece"*. A few months later, the Libyan delegation in Athens got involved in a quarrel between the New Democracy (ND) leader, E. Averoff and the government over PASOK's PLO policy. It subsequently sent to the press for publication a critical statement of Averoff, as Libya considered it as *"interference in domestic politics"* and *"unacceptable"* (McCaskill 1988, 311-312).

2.1.2 The Sinai Peace Force. The case of the Syrian Golan Heights

A few weeks after Arafat's visit to Athens, the latter opposed the deployment of a US- led peacekeeping force in the Sinai Peninsula. In this regard four member states of the EC (France, Italy, Netherlands and Great Britain) announced their intention to participate in the Sinai Peace Force, which was expected to supervise the implementation of the Camp David peace agreement. The Arabs were opposed as this move would act in favor of the peace agreement and subsequently Israel's security. The Greek government responded that this multinational force would not only embroil Europe in Arabs affairs, but also would recognize fully the Israeli- Egyptian

peace agreement. It thus opted to continue its policy of support to the Arabs and the Arab case (Hila 1984, 378; Agnantopoulos 2007, 361).

It is indisputable that the mission of this multinational force would amount to the recognition of the Camp David agreement, given that the statement released later by the four EC member states made no reference to the Palestinians' rights. Right after this unfortunate initiative of the four European states and under pressure from the Greek government, the '10' EC member states issued another statement reinforcing the Venice Declaration. Eventually, the '10' contended that *"negotiated peace should depend on the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implied the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people"*[14] (Hila 1988, 379).

Similar to the previous government, PASOK condemned the Camp David accords and voted for all UN resolutions rejecting provisions that ignored, infringed, violated or denied the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the rights to return, self-determination, national independence and sovereignty in Palestine[15] (ibid).

After Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights on December 14, 1981, the UN strongly condemned it as an act of aggression[16]. In light of these developments the Greek government continued to pursue its previous policy of support to the Arab case and the Palestinians. However, in some cases its policy differentiated, while expressing certain reservations on paragraphs demanding expulsion of Israel from the Organization (Hila 1988, 380-381). The reason that Greece did not keep an entirely condemnatory attitude towards Israel should be sought in the existence of the de facto relationship, as well as in the country's obligations of EC membership. Overall, Greece's policy was dictated by more moderate rules that did not comprise expulsion of any UN member state, as this would undermine the organization's global nature (ibid).

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[14] European Political Cooperation, Statements of the Foreign ministers and other Documents (1982).
[15] UN Resolutions 36/120F (1981), 37/123f (1982), 39/146A (1984).
[16] UN Resolution 37/123 (1982).

2.1.3 The Israeli Invasion to Lebanon. The Reagan and Fez Plans

Greek involvement in the 1982 crisis of Beirut was limited not only to the evacuation of the Palestinian leadership from the city, but also to furnishing army officers in Cyprus to act as escorts after Palestinians had refused to accept the Red Cross in that capacity (McCaskill 1988, 315). In addition, a Greek ferry escorted by French naval vessels and other Greek ships removed Arafat and 4,000 of his loyalists from Tripoli, in December 1983. Moreover, the Greek government agreed to treat 200-300 wounded Palestinians in Greek hospitals and help trans-ship others. Arafat's first stop in Athens after leaving Beirut on his way to Tunis provoked a wave of sympathy and friendship among the Greek population (McCaskill 1988, 315).

Literally, Greece's offer to cooperate in the evacuation was in line with the US strategy, given that the latter had supported in this respect any state mediation and namely the Greek one (Roussos 2005, 87-88). Greece's friendly attitude had been recognized even by *The* London *Times*, which had commented that *"Greece is the only non-Arab country to have helped the Palestinians"* (Nachmani 1987, 109).

In June 1982, at the EC Council of Foreign Ministers convened with respect to the Lebanon crisis, the Greek government asked from the member states to impose economic and trade sanctions, as well as arms embargo on Israel (Roussos 2005, 87). The relative statement adopted by the '10' had declared that the Israeli invasion constituted *"a flagrant violation of international law and of the most basic humanitarian principles"* (Hila 1988, 382). The above initiative was also accompanied by the inflammatory statement of Papandreou, who after his meeting with the head of the political department of the PLO, F. Kaddoumi in Athens he was quoted as saying that *"the crimes of the Nazis against the Jews… are replicated today by Israel at the expense of the heroic, proud Palestinian people"* (Roussos 2005, 87).

Papandreou had condemned the Israeli invasion and the massacres of the Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, at the Greek Parliament, the EC Council of Ministers and the NATO Conference. At the first, he described the invasion as a *"crime against humanity"*, where he spoke of the need to impose sanctions on Israel and called it an *"aggressor"* and *"murderer"*. Whereby, at the EC Council of Ministers held in Brussels on June 17, 1983 he described Israel as *"Nazi"*

and *"Fascist* and publicly accused the Jewish state of replicating the crimes committed by the Nazis (Abadi 2000, 58).

Additionally, at the NATO Summit held in Bonn, on June 10, 1982, Papandreou again denounced the invasion and characterized it as '*genocide'* (Hila 1988, 381). In this regard, the Greek government at the UN voted for the 'Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide' adopted by the General Assembly in 1948[17] and called for its immediate implementation (Hila 1988, 382).

Greece approved of the Reagan and Fez plans adopted on September 1, 1982 and September 11, 1982 respectively. Despite that the Reagan agreed upon the lines of the Camp David accords, Greece decided to support it. This can be justified on the basis that it had already been approved by Arafat, whereby, the majority of the Arab states welcomed it. Concerning the Fez resolution that called for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, Greece supported it too. Essentially, it was considered as an important step within the negotiating framework. Characteristically, Papandreou at the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, in June 1983 commented that as *"the '10' have expressed their support for the Fez plan; this move strongly condemns the establishment of the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories"* (Hila 1988, 382- 383).

2.1.4 Economic Prospect with the Arab States

The active pro- Arab policy sought throughout the first incumbency of PASOK (1981- 1985) aimed mainly at establishing relations of friendship with the Arab states, although with the prospect of closer economic relations, namely Algeria, Syria and Iraq (Roussos 2005, 88-89). Greece would have much to lose by alienating the Arabs, as it was the only non-Arab country to have received economic aid from the Arab League (February 1982). The Arab world had been for Greece the second-largest export market (after the EEC), whereby, construction companies had gained almost five billion dollars in building contracts (Nachmani 1987, 109).

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[17] UN Resolution 37/ 123 F (1982) §2.

However, Greek government officials who supposedly expected exports to Arab countries to rise throughout the 1980's were disappointed. Exports eventually fell from 1,295 million dollars in 1980, to 799 million dollars in 1985. Additionally, due to the drop in oil prices, which led to the decline of foreign exchange reserves and subsequently of the funds available for investment, agreements concluded with Algeria and Libya on construction and armament programs were neither implemented nor completed. This was also the case for other agreements made with Iraq, Egypt and Syria between 1974- 1981 and between 1982- 1989 (Roussos 2005, 88- 89).

In addition, Israel's exports to Greece, which included mainly textiles, chemicals, industrial products and minerals, in 1984 totaled 79.6 million dollars. Whereby, Greek exports to Israel, which included dried fruits and maritime transportation came only to 18.7 million dollars. This sharp difference of Greek trade with the Arab states and Israel was a result of politics that had made their mark. Characteristically, Greek- Israeli trade was confined to private traders, since Greece did not permit Israeli companies to access to official tenders (Nachmani 1987, 110).

2.1.5 The Cyprus Issue

With reference to the declaration of the Turkish Cypriot pseudo- state in November 1983, the Arab states and the PLO strongly supported Greece and Cyprus both at the UN and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) (Roussos 2005, 89). Many Arab states, including the PLO maintained cordial relations with the Greek Cypriots, while recognizing the Greek Cypriot government as the sole legitimate administration of the island. This was not only as a consequence of the pro- Arab attitude of Greece and Cyprus, but also of the bad relations of Turkey with Syria and Iraq (Sakkas n.d., 8). Nevertheless, the fact that the US opposed the status quo created after the Turkish invasion played a decisive role in the non- recognition of the pseudo-state by the Arabs (Roussos 2005, 89).

It should be pointed out that after 1983 and onwards the socialist government started to move closer to Israel. It signed various commercial and cultural agreements. In fact, it was during PASOK's incumbency that relations between Greece and Israel began to normalize (Abadi 2000, 61).

2.2 The Beginning of a New Approach

During the second term of Papandreou's premiership (1985-1989) PASOK adopted a friendlier attitude toward Israel. This change of policy was an attempt to silence opposition from the pro- Palestinian elements within PASOK, the Greek Communist Party and the Arab states. In fact, it was a consequence of soul searching within the party. Additionally, it was also a consequence of the pressures exerted by the EC on the Greek government to upgrade its ties with Israel (Abadi 2000, 61).

The US's disapproval of PASOK's courtship with the Third world and its friendly overtures to Qaddafi and Arafat forced Papandreou to shift his policy, although, without defying his Arab allies (Abadi 2000, 64). Thus, he expressed his government's decision to consider full diplomatic relations with Israel; however, he had made clear that he would continue to adhere to the principle of self-determination for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (ibid). In other words, improvement of bilateral relations remained in the Greek government agenda, although it was given low priority (Athanassopoulou 2010, 111-112).

Despite the ruling party had given the impression of having more an anti-Israeli policy, in fact it had the tendency to voice loudly its disagreement with the EC's view on the Arab- Israeli conflict. In reality, it was during PASOK's governance that Greece and Israel started to move toward normalization (Abadi 2000, 60-61).

PASOK's friendlier attitude towards Israel can be inferred by a number of frequent visits between the two sides and the subsequent signing of commercial and cultural agreements. Characteristically, in January 1986, the General Secretary of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Athens. During the subsequent visit of Israel's Minister of Tourism in May 1986, cooperation on tourism and joint tourist programs were decided upon. In return, the Deputy Minister of National Economy responsible for tourist affairs, Mr. Roumeliotes and the Chairman of the National Tourism Organization of Greece, Mr. Kyriazes had visited Tel- Aviv in 1986 (Kapsis 1988, 59).

Additionally, the General Secretaries of the Agriculture Ministries paid official visits to Athens and Tel-Aviv in 1986. Two members of the Israeli parliament visited Athens as guests of the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, whereby, the Greek Parliament Speaker, Mr. Aleuras visited Israel later on (ibid).

Cultural exchanges were also on the increase, with the renewal of an educational protocol and the appearance for the first time of Israeli dance companies at the 1987 Athens Festival and a visit by the President of the Athens Academy to Israel (ibid).

Ultimately, all the above contacts prepared the ground for the visit to Israel by the Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias, in November 1987 (Abadi 2000, 65). The Greek Foreign Minister had stated that Greece was seriously considering recognizing the Jewish state. This intention proved to be within the context of cooperation in a joint Greek- EC initiative aimed at finding a solution to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict (Kapsis 1988, 59; Sakkas n. d., 7-8; Athanassopoulou 2010, 112). In addition, the Greek-Israeli Chamber of Commerce established, as part of the efforts of the Israeli ambassador to Athens to improve economic ties with top Greek businessmen (Abadi 2000, 65).

2.2.1 Terrorism- related Matters

Papandreou's anti-American posture was reinforced by terrorism and terrorism-related matters and particularly Greece's refusal to comply with the US and other suggestions, such as tightening security at the Athens airport (McCaskill 1988, 319). This subsequently led to the charge that Greece was 'soft' on terrorism (ibid). So, when he was called upon to respond to allegations that his government was not fully committed to the fight against terrorism he responded that *"there is a difference between terrorism and a liberation movement"* (Agnantopoulos 2007, 373). In this context, a leading figure of the so-called 'progressive left', in response to the arrest of a Palestinian accused of committing a terrorist act had stated that *"it is one thing to condemn terrorism, when it occurs outside the occupied territories and another thing to acknowledge the undisputable right of the Palestinian people to defend their country"* (ibid).

In addition, a journalist had remarked that *"under Papandreou's rule, Arab terrorism has gained its foothold in Europe"* (ibid). Even among Israeli officials, Papandreou was considered as pro- Palestinian and condemned for encouraging Palestinian terrorism (ibid).

In the meantime, the ruling party continued condemning Israel for its acts, as for instance the Israeli attack on the PLO headquarters, in Tunis on October 1, 1985 (Abadi 2000, 62). Papandreou had described it as *"an act of state terrorism, which is a hideous form of war"* (ibid).

Athens had become the scene of continuing terrorist incidents. In October 1981, the publishers of two of Athens' well known conservative newspapers were killed in what appeared to have been political killings. Other killings occurred regularly; including that of the American Navy Captain George Tsantes, which seemed to have the PLO and other Arab organizations being involved (McCaskill 1988, 320).

With regard to the opposition, it had charged the ruling party with allegations that terrorists entered Greece freely without any control and that terrorism had gone unchecked in the country. Meanwhile, bombings occurred on a regular basis, as many of them were directed at Americans and American facilities. The most serious incident involved the Trans World Airlines (TWA) hijacking in 1985 that resulted in the issuance of a US travel advisory costing Greece a major drop in tourist revenues, namely 60% or 700 million dollars in 1986 (McCaskill 1988, 320; Roussos 2005, 90).

Another incident that related Papandreou with terrorism involved allegations made by the American administration that the Greek government had been in contact with the terrorist Abu Nidal, in order to insure that there would be no terrorist activities on Greek soil and thus protect the Greek tourist industry. According to a State Department White Paper which had been at issue, Greece was among the three countries (together with Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) *"weak-kneed in their dealings with guerilla or terrorist groups"*. Papandreou fearing that such material if published would damage the country's tourist trade; he termed the allegations as *"a hostile act against Greece"* and threatened to freeze US base negotiations. Eventually the crisis receded after the Undersecretary of State Michael Armacost reassured the Greek Foreign Minister that there was no intention of accusing Greece of cooperating with terrorists (McCaskill 1988, 321).

CHAPTER 3 – GREEK-ISRAELI RAPPROCHEMENT

3.1 Normalization of Greek- Israeli Relations

3.1.1 In the early 1990s

Greek- Israeli relations during Cold War were distant and antagonistic. The reasons were not a product of an anti-Semitic behavior, but rather three specific national interest considerations. Athens feared of possible repercussions for the Greek minorities, while hoping that good relations with the Arabs would amount to economic benefits. Additionally, it consistently sought to enlist Arab support at the UN over the Cyprus issue (Tziampiris 2015, 10; Athanassopoulou 2010, 111).

As Greece's pronounced pro-Palestinian policy changed after the mid-1980s, PASOK's fierce condemnation of Israeli acts, also, ceased. Although Athens had seriously considered recognizing Israel after Papoulias' public statement in 1987, this effort was abandoned due not only to domestic political constraints, but also to the new political climate emerged in Middle East (Tziampiris 2015, 50).

In fact, it was the next right-wing government of Constantine Mitsotakis (1990-1993) that recognized Israel officially. Greek- Israeli relations were upgraded from diplomatic representation to full ambassadorial level in May 1990. Surprisingly, persistent fears of imminent sanctions or even diplomatic protests by Arab countries were defeated, as well as no terrorist attacks occurred. Additionally, after Spain's recognition of Israel in 1986, Greece became the last EC member state to have granted *de jure* recognition to the Jewish state (Abadi 2000, 64; Athanassopoulou 2010, 112).

Despite Greek-Israeli normalization of relations, Greek policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict changed little. The Greek government persisted on pressuring EC members to address the issue of the Palestinian rights. Yet, the Greek view on the Palestinian issue continued to be influenced by the similarities between the occupation of Cyprus and the occupation of Palestine (Abadi 2000, 65).

The factors urged Greece to consider a rapprochement with Israel in the early 1990s were the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) - that left

the US the sole dominant power in the world - the realization of the military and economic capabilities of the Jewish state and the emergence of a new power balance in the Middle East (after the revival of peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, at the Madrid Conference in 1991). Given that the Middle East peace talks were based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, Athens regarded its criteria for improving relations with Tel Aviv to be satisfied. Hence, the beginning of the peace process in Middle East, which legitimized Israel in the region, facilitated the Greek government to fend off domestic and Arab reactions. Additionally, as a key motivating factor to normalization was the belief among Foreign Ministry circles, in Athens and Nicosia that it was time to seek out the support of the American-Jewish lobby, over the 30-year-old Cyprus problem (Sakkas n.d., 9; Athanassopoulou 2010, 112).

Immediately after the establishment of diplomatic relations, a number of important mutual visits at a high level from Israel to Greece followed, while several agreements signed. In 1992, Mitsotakis became the first Greek Prime Minister to visit Israel. In 1993, the Israeli deputy Foreign Minister paid his first official visit to Greece, accompanied by senior officials from the ministries of tourism, energy and infrastructure (Abadi 2000, 66). Yet, a Greek-Israeli agreement on cultural, educational and scientific cooperation signed and laid the basis for granting of scholarships to Israeli citizens, exchange of visits by teachers and university of professors as well as artists, scientists, writers etc. In this context, the Onassis Foundation funded the establishment of a department for Greek studies at the University of Haifa (Abadi 2000, 66; Tziampiris 2015, 50; Sakkas n.d., 9-10).

Nevertheless, the most significant step in this direction was taken in December 1994, under the next government of Andreas Papandreou (1993-1996). More precisely, the Israeli Defense Minister, Yitzhak Rabin and the Greek Defense Minister, Gerasimos D. Arsenis on a visit to Israel signed a defense cooperation agreement (Abadi 2000, 66). This agreement stipulated the participation in military exercises, joint naval exercises, exchange of views on air transport, oceanography and a general framework for arms procurement (Tziampiris 2015, 50; Abadi 2000, 66). However, it was never implemented as both sides seemed reluctant (Tziampiris 2015, 50). The reasons behind this unwillingness had been the friendly relations that Greece wished to maintain with the Arab states, as well as pressures exerted by Turkey on

Israel to avoid any joint military exercises with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean (ibid). Also, it faced strong reaction from pro-Arab elements within PASOK, while according to well-informed Greek diplomatic sources; the Syrian president Hafez al Assad during a phone conversation with the Greek Prime Minister expressed strongly his disappointment (Athanassopoulou 2010, 112). Similarly, unsuccessful talks concerning the conduct of joint naval military maneuvers near the island of Rhodes took place in 1997 (Tziampiris 2015, 50).

It is worth pointing out that the short-lived renaissance of Greek- Israeli relations lasted approximately for three years, as it coincided with the Turkish- Israeli alliance formed in the same period. As a result of the latter, Greek- Israeli relations strained. Eventually, Athens considered seriously improving relations with Israel, in parallel with maintaining ties with the Arab states only in the very late 1990s (Karagiannis 2012, 3; Athanassopoulou 2010, 118- 122).

3.1.2 Turkish- Israeli Military Ties

Despite the positive influence of the factors presented above on the Greek- Israeli relationship; in fact it was another strategic development that brought a significant change in Greece's policy towards Israel. That was the strategic alliance between Turkey and Israel emerged in the 1990s, which caused serious concerns and strong reaction on a regional level.

The Israeli-Turkish strategic cooperation started in 1996 gave rise to strong Greek reaction, while Athens perceived it as a threat to its national security. The Greek government feared that a strategic relationship between Israel and Turkey - Greece's perennial adversary - would change the power balance in the region and consequently have negative security implications for the country. Additionally, Turkey's military enhanced capability was seen as it would strengthen its regional role, which would pose significant threat to Greek territorial waters in the Aegean (Athanassopoulou 2010, 113).

Moreover, the Greek government became suspicious for another reason. Turkey's advancement of its military systems and technology - after major arms deals agreed with Israel in 1996 and 1998 - introduced an element of unpredictability to the military balance between the two countries, since the US maintained traditionally the

Aegean military balance. At the same time, Greece was concerned that Turkey would become strategically important for the US, resulting in the increase of the American Jewish lobby's support for Turkey on issues affecting Greece's interests (ibid).

Indicative of Greece's suspicions over the Turkish- Israeli defense ties was the statement of the Greek Foreign Minister, Theodore Pangalos who was quoted as saying that *"this is an alliance of wrongdoers, which brings us to the Cold War situation"* (Abadi 2000, 67, 68). Additionally, Pangalos had reacted to the pact by saying also, that *"we don't want this military cooperation between them to cast a shadow on the relations among Israel, Greece and Cyprus. And we are not interested in Ankara using its military cooperation with Israel to create this sort of impression"* (ibid).

3.1.3 In the late 1990s

Before Greece had considered seriously improving relations with Israel and despite its negative perception of the strong Turkish- Israeli military ties, between 1997 and 1999, the country still did not have a clear-cut policy regarding its relationship with Israel. The reasons that Greece was lacking of a comprehensive policy or an action strategy with the Jewish state was partly due to inertia, and partly to the opposition of PASOK cadres who advocated solidarity with the Palestinians and the Arabs in general. This position was reinforced by a general perception in Greek governing circles that Athens had nothing to gain by promoting ties with Tel Aviv since the latter viewed its relations with Ankara as a zero-sum game (Athanassopoulou 2010, 116-117).

The idea that Greece could gain by promoting relations with Israel started to grow within the broader context of the foreign policy goals pursued by the next government of PASOK of Konstantinos Simitis (1996-2004). Among the Greek government officials who were in support of warming up Greek- Israeli relations were the Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yannos Kranidiotis and other senior Foreign Ministry officials. In essence, these goals were part of Athens' attempts to align with the European Union (EU) policy and the US, while abandoning the previous policy of Papandreou's government, which had supported cooperation with the Third World. This was considered as it had damaged Greece's image as a reliable ally to the West (Athanassopoulou 2010, 118).

Hence, Greek advocates of promoting relations with Israel started to share the belief that Athens by showing lack of enthusiasm for cooperation was simply pushing the Israelis closer to the Turks. The arguments put forward based on a balanced Greek policy towards the Arab- Israeli conflict. Most of Greek senior officials had been sympathetic to the Palestinians and contended that relations with the Arabs should be maintained and, if possible, strengthened. They also supported that Greece would benefit from this policy, as it would counterbalance the Turkish-Israeli relationship and the Turkish influence on the American Jewish lobby in Washington regarding Cyprus. In addition, the country would receive from Israel advanced military technology and expertise (ibid).

In August 1999, Kranidiotis during his working visit to Israel; he gave an interview to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. In this interview, he welcomed the opening of the new era in relations between Israel and Greece and presented a long list of upcoming visits (including those of Tsochatzopoulos and Stefanopoulos). With respect to the new relationship he had commented that the Israeli interest for cooperation lies in the capability of Greece to become a "*gateway and bridge between the Middle East and Western Europe*". He had further added that *"Greece has good relations with the Arab world and with the Palestinians, and we believe that we can contribute to bringing the two sides closer to each other"* (Haaretz 1999, August 13).

It is worth pointing out that Kranidiotis had been considered as a staunch Papandreou loyalist. However, this change of policy he underwent with regard to Israel was probably a general change occurred within the ruling party. He had also been actively involved in the *Athens Dialogue* set up two years earlier. Finally, with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Kranidiotis had supported the Greek policy pursued traditionally, namely Israel's right to exist in peace, as well as the Palestinians rights to self-determination and statehood (ibid).

Athens's change of view toward Israel by moving closer matured in the very late 1990's, while spurring foreign policy makers to formulate an active foreign policy. This policy would draw upon the development of significant Greek- Israeli ties in the commercial, diplomatic and military fields. Indicative had been the visit to Israel of the Greek Minister of Defense, Akis Tsochadzopoulos in 1999, when he called Israel to cooperate in issues of strategic and security concern, while supporting

the revival of the 1994 security agreement that had been inactive for the last seven years. Additionally, in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, the Greek Defense Minister had invited the Israeli defense industries to sell weapons systems to Greece, based on the $16 billion arms procurement program announced in 1999 (Athanassopoulou 2010, 119).

As the government of PASOK had shown interest in promoting bilateral relations with Israel, it also wished to avoid causing any tension with the Arab world, as well as stirring up discontent among the party and cabinet members, who were ideologically committed to the Palestinian cause. Additionally, ahead had been the Greek general elections scheduled for April 2000. Thus, the Greek Defense Minister at his visit to Israel opted to hold meetings with the Palestinian leadership at the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority. Additionally, in his interview with the Jerusalem Post, the Greek Minister had criticized Israel's strategic relationship with Turkey by pointing out that *"bilateral defense policies cannot be successful if you really wish peace and real stabilization in the area"*. He had also been quoted as saying that holding joint naval operations, like those between Israel and Turkey had not been an important issue; in fact Greece had recommended a broader exercise with the participation of Cyprus, Egypt and Jordan (Athanassopoulou 2010, 120).

Constantinos Stefanopoulos became the first ever Greek Head of State to visit Israel, in the spring of 2000. During this visit despite he met with the Palestinian leader Arafat, he declined to meet him in East Jerusalem. To the Palestinians, official meetings taking place in East Jerusalem supposed to strengthen their claim to the city. As this visit took place during the second *Intifada* crisis (began in October 2000) it subsequently proved that the Greek government managed to sustain a major crisis, while reaching a turning point in its policy towards Israel. Additionally, the Jewish state had already received an extremely harsh anti-Israeli stance adopted by the Greek media, while the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs in his conversation with the Israeli ambassador to Athens sharply criticized the military reprisals of the Israeli government against the Palestinians (ibid).

Undoubtedly, the PASOK government of Simitis supported the belief that good relations with Israel served important Greek interests. Athens's decision to upgrade relations emerged to turn into a policy goal through which Greece would

achieve more remote goals of national policy and security. In fact, Athens had feared that the strengthening of Israeli- Turkish ties could turn against it, given also Israel's key relationship with the US. Athens viewed its relationship with Israel so as to counterbalance the Turkish provocative and aggressive behavior, particularly after the Imia crisis erupted in 1996. Moreover, Turkey traditionally had dominated Greek security thinking. Greece, also, sought to improve bilateral relations as this would help getting support in Europe for Cyprus's accession in the EU (Athanassopoulou 2010, 122-123).

The above position of the Greek government can be summarized in the following Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs memorandum presented in the summer of 2000; *"Israel and its security play a central role in shaping the US policy in Eastern Mediterranean and consequently regarding Cyprus and Greek- Turkish relations. Any solution whatsoever to the problems in the region will by necessity take this factor seriously into consideration. Therefore, improvement to our relations with Israel and reactivation of our relations with the Arab countries are required"* (Athanassopoulou 2010, 121).

The Foreign Ministry memorandum also mentioned about reactivating links with the Arabs. This can be explained as Greece still needed Arab support on Cyprus, while pro-Arab elements in governing circles continued to be at work in parallel with the new forces favored of improving ties with Israel. Even the latter seemed to sustain pro-Palestinian reflexes. Besides, Greek public still maintained strong pro-Palestinian feelings. In essence, the Greek government of PASOK was interested in improving ties with Israel, without, however damaging its traditional ties with the Arabs (ibid).

With regard to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, Athens expressed its full support for the Oslo Accords and attempted to mediate between Israelis and Palestinians, through the convening of a series of meetings that brought together the two parts, in the summer of 1997. This was the so-called *'Athens Dialogue for Peace and Cooperation in the Middle East'* lasted from 1997 until 1999 (Agnantopoulos, 2007, 361; Kefala 2003, 679). The aim of the *'Athens Dialogue'*, to quote the words of Kranidiotis *"is to assist in the peace process in Middle East and create a climate of friendship. It is rather a measure of confidence building between the new Israeli government and the Palestinian leadership. Greece as an Eastern Mediterranean*

country has every interest in seeing the peace process to proceed, given its national considerations, presence in the region, given that everything happens in Middle East affects both the Greek foreign policy and the Cyprus issue" (Kefala 2003, 679-680).

Although Greece attempted to stay impartial to the stalemate, in case of the Middle East Peace Process followed by the breakout of the second Palestinian Intifada, in fact it adopted the view that Israel had largely been responsible for it. The Greek government strongly criticized Israel for its unwillingness to dismantle the illegal Jewish settlements, as well as the building of the security fence and the practice of the extrajudicial killings, which merely led to the perpetuation of violence. Additionally, Athens openly accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinian people (Agnantopoulos 2007, 361-362).

3.2 Greek- Israeli Rapprochement

3.2.1 Deterioration of Turkish- Israeli Relations
Although Israel and Turkey enjoyed close military and economic relations during the 1990's, the assumption of power in Turkey by an Islamist government with the ambition to play a protagonist role in the Middle East and the Arab world created an unfriendly political environment towards Israel (Tziampiris 2015, 66-67). Subsequently, an overwhelmingly pro- Palestinian Turkish public opinion was formed, particularly after the breakout of the Second Intifada in 2000 (ibid). Characteristically, after a 2004 poll conducted in the country, two thirds of those surveyed believed that Turkey should side with the Palestinians, while only three percent favored siding with Israel (ibid). Prior to the Turkish- Israeli closeness of the 1990s, bilateral relations soured after the 1967 Six Day War, when Ankara adopted mostly a pro-Arab foreign policy (Tziampiris 2015, 64).

The emergence of Greek- Israeli cooperation coincided with the decline of Greece's power compared to that of Turkey's (Tziampiris 2015, 10). The impressive economic growth of Turkey that took place while Greece entered a serious economic crisis in 2008 created an asymmetric military and strategic relationship, largely in Turkey's favor (Stergiou 2013, 490; Tziampiris 2015, 58-64). Additionally, the

deterioration of Turkey's special relationship with Israel started in 2008 and climaxed in 2012 due to a series of incidents laid the foundations for a new beginning in the relationship between Greece- Cyprus and Israel (Stergiou 2013, 496).

The rise of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002 brought a gradual change in Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East. The JDP government made overtures to the Muslim and Arab world, particularly after Israel's 2008 *Operation Cast Lead* in the Gaza Strip, in the late 2008 and early 2009, while Turkey harshly criticizing Israel's military offensive. Ever since, bilateral relations strained (Uzer 2013, 1). More specifically, the Turkish Prime Minister, Rejep Tayyip Erdogan and the Israeli President, Shimon Peres clashed during a panel discussion at the Davos World Economic Forum in 2009, as the first expressed his displeasure for the Israeli invasion of Gaza during which the vast majority of Palestinian deaths had been civilians, as well as large areas of Gaza razed (Tziampiris 2015, 67).

Turkish- Israeli relations deteriorated further in May 2010 following an Israeli naval raid on a Turkish-sponsored flotilla ship and precisely on a ship named *Mavi Marmara* carrying humanitarian aid, with the aim to break the blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt on the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip since 2007. This attack caused the death of nine activists, eight of whom were of Turkish nationality (Stergiou 2013, 490; Tziampiris 2015, 67-68; Uzer 2013, 3-4).

3.2.2 Greek- Israeli Relations

As the deadly events surrounding the Gaza Flotilla and the *Mavi Marmara* provoked the harsh condemnation of Athens, the latter perceived them as a catalyst and foresaw a new diplomatic relationship emerging between Athens and Tel Aviv (Tziampiris 2015, 82, 84; Marcantonatos n.d., 2). Subsequently, the then Greek Prime Minister, George Papandreou (2009-2011) paid an official visit to Israel in July 2010 to improve bilateral relations (Stergiou 2013, 2). He had also made concerted effort to demonstrate that this visit should not be interpreted as an anti- Palestinian action, as he also met with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmood Abbas (Tziampiris 2015, 85). With regard to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, G. Papandreou expressed his support for peace negotiations, as well as his wish *"to see the end of the*

occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state, a stable and viable state that would live in full cooperation and peace with Israel" (ibid).

G. Papandreou's visit to Israel was followed three weeks later by the visit to Athens of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in August 2010. The latter became the first Israeli prime minister to visit Greece more than sixty years since the creation of Israel in 1949 (Tziampiris 2015, 86). During this visit the two sides agreed to cooperate on defense and security issues and signed various agreements in the fields of security, energy, trade and tourism (Karagiannis 2012, 4). Regarding the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, the Greek Prime Minister reiterated his support for the creation of a *"viable, democratic and friendly towards Israel Palestinian state"* (Tziampiris 2015, 86-87). Thereafter, in a period of seven months, eleven Greek Ministers visited Israel and signed memorandums of cooperation whereby reflected the start of a new era in Greek- Israeli relations (Marcantonatos n.d., 2). This new era between Athens and Tel Aviv had important consequences to Israel's relationship with Cyprus, in the sense of establishing of the Cyprus, Israel and Lebanon Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in December 2010 (Marcantonatos n.d., 2; Tsiampiris 2015, 106).

In May 2011, almost a year after the Gaza Freedom Flotilla incident, it was announced that a second flotilla, named *Freedom Flotilla II* had been being organized with the aim to break the Israeli embargo on Gaza. As Athens feared that such a move would endanger improved bilateral relations with Israel, it decided to ban all flotilla ships from sailing from Greek ports delivering aid to Gaza (Tziampiris 2015, 110). It is also important to point out that the actions of the Greek authorities regarding the *Freedom Flotilla II* had been approved earlier by the great powers, the UN, the EU, as well as the Palestinian Authority (Tziampiris 2015, 112). In addition, the Greek government had informed beforehand its Arab allies and particularly the Palestinian President Abbas of all events and upcoming developments so as to preserve the power balance (Tziampiris 2015, 109).

Any belief that Greece was going to support Israel on all issues refuted in November 2011, after the government of Papandreou joined 106 other states and voted in favor of upgrading Palestine to a full member of the United Nation's Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Furthermore, the next government

of Lukas Papadimos (Nov. 2011 - May 2012) voted in favor of granting the Palestinian Authority a 'non-member observer state status' at the United Nations General Assembly, in late November 2012 (Tziampiris 2015, 115).

During the rule of the new government of Papadimos, the opposition leader of ND, Antonis Samaras revealed the broader bipartisan support existing in favor of cooperation with Israel. In his interview he explained that *"my party has been supporting for decades a more balanced approach towards the Middle East. Establishing closer ties with Israel is one of the very few initiatives by the ex-Prime Minister that we, as an opposition party, full-heartedly supported. As a matter of fact we have encouraged him publicly in the Parliament to do so. And when he did, we stood by him on the issue"* (Tziampiris 2015, 123).

On May 6, 2012 general elections held in Greece. As no party won an absolute majority of the parliamentary seats and after it proved impossible to form a coalition government, new elections called. During the pre-election period, a parliamentary radical Left party, named Coalition of the Radical Left- Unitary Social Front (SYRIZA-EKM) that happens to be the ruling party today explained its foreign policy toward the Middle East. The party criticized Netanyahu's visit to Athens, condemned Greece's handling of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla II and addressed relations between Athens and Tel Aviv in its revised program as such: *"Beyond our comprehensive and categorical antithesis for any agreement for military cooperation between Greece and Israel that makes our country a satellite (of Israel) we should work efficiently so that we cancel this agreement, as that our country does not become involved, directly or indirectly in a potential war with Iran or in the Arab world"* (Tziampiris 2015, 124-125).

Furthermore, in the pre- election period of the general elections to be held on January 25, 2015 the leader of SYRIZA- EKM, Alexis Tsipras in a meeting he had with the Ambassador of the Palestinian Authority in Greece, Marwan Toubassi engaged with recognizing the state of Palestine, as soon as his party came in first. Following the general elections hold on January 25, 2015, the current Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras informed the Foreign Minister of the Palestinian Authority, Riyad al-Maliki that his party would support an initiative to propose the recognition of the Palestinian state by the Greek Parliament. Tsipras also expressed his support to

the Palestinian people and stressed the need to restart negotiations with Israel (Greek Reporter, 2015).

Eventually, after the visit of the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmood Abbas to Athens on December 20, 2015, the Greek parliament became the latest European legislative body to recommend recognition of a Palestinian state (ekathimerini, 2015). Hence, a non-binding symbolic resolution unanimously approved by the parliament's defense and foreign affairs committee calling on the government to recognize Palestine as a state (Jerusalem Post, 2015). In this regard, the move of recognition through the parliament, rather than the government made in order not to disturb the close ties with Israel (The Times of Israel, 2015). Additionally, the resolution also called on the Greek government *"to make every effort for the immediate recommencement of direct and credible peace talks between the two sides"* (JTA, 2015).

Conclusions

In this paper we undertook to examine the Greek approach on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting from the creation of Israel and until the latest Greek parliamentary act regarding the recognition of a Palestinian state. Thus, it was considered appropriate to examine the different positions adopted by successive Greek governments throughout the period covered. In fact, the factors urged a differentiated policy with respect to the conflict influenced by external and internal forces. We should not miss out the influence of the US and the EU; the political climate emerged in the Middle East, as well as the Greek political scene and domestic politics. In this respect, Greek policy in Middle East reflected a concern for maintaining significant national interests in the Arab world.

The first chapter covered the period starting from the end of the civil war in 1949 until the early 1980's. During this period, Greek policy was mostly pro- Arab, while relations with Israel were cold, distant and antagonistic. Greece's pro- Arab policy was dictated by the fact that the country had important interests to maintain, such as the Cyprus issue, the Greek community in Egypt, securing energy supplies, controlling the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and guaranteeing unrestricted passage through the Suez Canal. Its negative attitude towards Israel, despite US pressures could be justified on the basis that Greece had attached significant value to the universal rights of self-determination and territorial integrity of Palestine, defining them as a guiding principle to an independent statehood. This is why it refused to recognize Israel in 1949, while voting for the Palestinian people in whatever issue of debate.

The second chapter covered the decade of the 1980's. In this period, Greece followed an actively pro- Arab policy, culminating in upgrading diplomatic relations with the Palestinians, namely granting diplomatic status to the PLO. This change of policy reflected Papandreou's Third World orientation, as he had adopted an anti-American and strong pro-PLO stand, while using harsh rhetoric against Israel. The perception that Greece tilted toward radicalization reinforced by a series of terrorist incidents occurred on Greek soil, while triggering accusations that Greece was not doing enough to deter and fight against terrorism. Although, PASOK's support for the Palestinians was unwavering and diplomatic contacts with hard line Arab states had

increased, the socialist regime also pursued a policy of greater accommodation with Israel.

In the third chapter, the end of the 1980's brought a significant change in Greek policy in Middle East. Greece's decision to pursue a policy of greater accommodation with Israel in the 1990s had been facilitated significantly by a number of reasons. The end of the Cold War brought a safer geopolitical environment in Europe, while in the Middle East, peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians at the Madrid Conference in 1991 had progressed positively. Greece adopted a clear-cut policy toward Israel, only in the late 1990s. Since 2010, Greek policy makers adopted a more balanced foreign policy aiming at promoting bilateral relations both with Israel and the Arabs. This change of view toward the Jewish state was a result of pressure exerted from Greek government officials who advocated alignment with the US and the EU, while wishing to abandon Papandreou's Third World affiliations.

Greece's foreign policy in the Middle East throughout the period under consideration had been largely driven by its domestic policy, namely the type of the government, its economic policies and priorities, its state-citizenship relations, neighboring relationships, cultural approaches to conflict resolution, etc. Additionally, Greece's decision to involve actively in the Middle Eastern affairs had been dependent heavily on the priority level attributed to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, which could turn against to its domestic priorities and long-term national stability.

The main factor determined Greece's policy in the Middle East has largely been its traditionally friendly relationship maintained with the Arabs. The pro- Arab policy pursued by successive Greek governments throughout the period of examination has been its main foreign policy orientation, while supporting its objectives.

The postwar governments followed a pro- Arab foreign policy in order to protect the large Greek community in Egypt and secure Arab support on the Cyprus Problem at the UN. Therefore, Greece recognized only de facto the Jewish state.

Following the Suez crisis of 1956, the Nasser regime started expelling the Greek population from Egypt. Nevertheless, successive Greek governments, including

the military continued their pro- Arab foreign policy. From the very beginning, Greece supported for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and for the Arab struggle for an independent homeland. While at the same time, it supported Israel's right to exist within safe and internationally recognized borders.

Greek- Arab relations started to improve considerably with the new civilian government of Karamanlis, in 1974. As bilateral relations improved on economic and trade level, the Greek government achieved to obtain Arab support on Cyprus at the UN, as the Arab states condemned the Turkish invasion and did not recognize the so-called Turkish republic of Cyprus.

The rise to power of PASOK in 1981, under the leadership of Papandreou, shifted the Greek foreign policy even closer to the Middle East. The Greek government gave refuge to Palestinian fighters and upgraded the status of the PLO representation. The socialist government supported the creation of a Palestinian state, together with Israel's right to exist in peace.

The start of the 1990s brought a significant change in Greek policy in the Middle East. Greece's awkward stance on the region isolated the country from its European partners and the US. As a result, the right-wing Mitsotakis government recognized de jure the Jewish state in 1990. Consequently, a short-lived renaissance of Greek- Israeli relations emerged in the early 1990s. Due to the strengthening of Turkish- Israeli relations in the mid-1990s, which Athens considered as a threat to its national security, Greek- Israeli relations were strained, while Greece continued its pro- Arab policy.

Since 2010, Greek- Israeli relations improved rapidly. The two countries signed agreements in the field of security, energy, trade and tourism. The strengthening of bilateral relations came as a result of the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli defense ties, particularly after the Gaza flotilla incident. Additionally, the Greek economic crisis had meant that the country could not afford to ignore Israel as a trade and energy partner.

However, this new relationship proved not to be against the longstanding traditional friendship maintained with the Arabs. The government of G. Papandreou

supported the creation of a viable, democratic and friendly towards Israel Palestinian state.

Yet, Greek governments upgraded Palestine to a full member of UNESCO and voted for granting the Palestinian Authority a 'non-member observer status', at the UN General Assembly in 2011 and 2012 respectively. In addition, the Greek parliament approved unanimously a symbolic non-binding resolution, calling on the government to recognize Palestine as a state, after the visit of the President of the Palestinian Authority to Athens in 2015.

Overall, Greece's stance on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict throughout the period covered remained steadfastly supportive on the Palestinians rights to self-determination and independent statehood, together with Israel's right to exist in peace. More precisely, it supported the creation of an independent and democratic Palestinian state coexisting in peace with Israel, within internationally recognized borders based on the pre-1967 line, and which has its capital in East Jerusalem. Greece has been in favor of finding a comprehensive solution based on two states, a choice that would respond satisfactorily to Israel's longstanding demand for security and the Palestinians' longstanding demand for a state.

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